



AVOIDING **COLDS** and the **FLU**

FEBRUARY 2015

How to Boost your Immune System:

You are probably well aware of the things you should be doing to avoid the flu or cold, like getting your flu shot, washing your hands frequently, not touching your eyes, nose or mouth, and avoiding sick people, but what about increasing your body's ability to fight infection? Fortunately, there are six simple things you can do to boost your immunity and slash the number of times you get sick this year.

Sleep soundly: Who couldn't stand to get a few more ZZZ's? Sleep is essential for our body to repair and renew. The recommended amount of sleep for adults is between seven to nine hours per night. Try to get to bed the same time every night (even weekends) and wake up the same time each day, to determine the amount of sleep you need to feel rested and alert. Be stingy with your sleep time and don't compromise your ZZZ's.

Exercise regularly: Regular exercise increases the number of certain immune cells, called natural killer cells, making your immune system more

efficient at destroying bad bacteria and viruses. Exercise also reduces the amount of cortisol and adrenaline; stress producing hormones that reduce immunity.

Eat well: Fruits and vegetables have lots of antioxidants that help our body to fight stress that happens from physical and mental stressors. Healthy nutrition is the ticket to a strong immune system. Your stomach contains good bacteria that help reduce inflammation and infection. Probiotics, which feed the good bacteria, can be found in certain foods like yogurt, kefir and fermented foods like kimchi.

Relax more: Whether stress is physical or mental, it still takes a toll on your health. You may not be able to change the environment or circumstances, but you can change your perception and reduce your negative response. Practice changing negative thoughts to more positive ones and don't forget to breathe.



Laugh often: A good laugh increases your oxygen intake, improves blood circulation, decreases blood pressure, reduces pain, and decreases the stress hormone, cortisol. Bust out the comedy.

Antibiotics: Antibiotics are effective at destroying bacteria, not viruses. Take only prescribed antibiotics and finish the complete dose. Not finishing a full course of antibiotics can cause bacteria to become resistant to the antibiotics and harder to kill. Avoid using leftover antibiotics to "self-treat" other illnesses.

Resources:
Webmd.com and CDC.gov

Make Healthier Choices When Dining Out

Do you know what you and your family are having for dinner tonight? A recent study has found that 70% of Americans don't know what they are having for dinner at 4:00 in the afternoon. If this were you, what would you do? Many Americans respond by picking up fast food or going to restaurants. If eating healthy or weight loss is a goal for you, a situation like this could be "a disaster waiting to happen." With a little bit of advanced thinking and some simple strategies you could turn this into an opportunity for a "clutch win in the final minutes on the clock!"



Tips when dining out:

- **Ask yourself, "am I hungry?"** If, "yes," then follow up with "how hungry am I?" If you are not hungry, perhaps you have time to be creative in your own kitchen. If you are very hungry it can be harder to make healthy food choices. Having a piece of fruit or a serving of a fresh vegetable before leaving work will allow you to feel comfortable, rather than crazed when you get to your destination.
- **Advanced preparation.** Think about where you will eat and what you will select before you get there. When you know from past experience that you can create healthier options which taste good, you will be more likely to follow through with good intentions.
- **"On the side."** Ask for salad dressing, spreads, and butter to be served on the side. Then use only as much as you need for the flavor. Your taste buds are amazing at picking up subtle flavors in small portions.
- **Consider portion sizes.** Restaurants often serve portions that are enough to feed two or three people.
 - Order an appetizer sized portion, a side dish or share an entrée.
 - Order from the menu instead heading for the "all-you-can-eat" buffet.
 - When your food is delivered, set aside or pack half of it to go immediately.
 - Resign from the "clean your plate club" - when you feel satisfied, leave the rest.
- **Choose menu items that contain vegetables, fruits, and broiled or grilled meats.** By intentionally seeking these foods, you get more nutrition and a meal lower in fat.
- **Read between the lines.** Any menu description that uses the words creamy, breaded, crisp, fried, sauced, stuffed, buttery, sautéed, pan-fried, or au gratin is likely loaded with hidden fats. Choose instead: baked, steamed, broiled, seared or grilled.
- **Ask to "triple the vegetables, please."** Often a side of vegetables in a restaurant is really a garnish—a carrot and a forkful of squash. When ordering, ask for three or four times the normal serving of veggies.
- **Speak up.** Ask for what you need or would like. Nearly all the chains have healthier options, even if they are not on the menu.
- **Savor the experience.** Eat slowly and enjoy each bite. Eat with the intention of feeling better when you are done eating. You will feel more satisfied and less stressed rather than being completely stuffed.

Resources: Webmd.com; Choosemyplate.gov; Eatright.org

Bringing Wellness Home: What's your family's wellness culture?

Families come in all shapes, sizes, and dimensions but one thing is for sure, they all have a culture. So what is a family culture? It can best be described as, "That's the way we do things at our home." If you are interested in creating a culture of wellness in your home, you may want to consider some of the following suggestions:

- Sit down and eat dinner together as often as possible. Don't fret; meals don't have to be fancy. Spend the time together sharing what each other's day was like or start an interesting conversation that might go on well into the evening.
- Be an active family. Spend time together enjoying physical activity on a weekly basis. Walking and talking after dinner, shooting hoops in the driveway, biking, dancing in the living room and don't forget cleaning house all count.
- Always have fruits and vegetables available for healthy snacking choices and limit sweetened drinks. Fruits and vegetables can be fresh, canned or dried. Choose water and low fat milk instead of soda and other sweetened beverages.
- Limit screen time, other than work, to no more than 2 hours a day for the whole family. This includes watching TV, playing video games, and using the computer and other electronic devices. Use the new found time cooking, eating and playing together.
- Be supportive of one another as you make family wellness changes and remember, "Rome wasn't built in a day."

Resources: cdc.gov; choosemyplate.gov; nhlbi.net

fresh

AND
HEALTHY

RECIPE
OF THE
MONTH



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Quick Mexican Brown Rice

Your family might be more inclined to like brown rice if it is in a mixed dish like this one.

Makes: 8 Servings

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 cups brown rice, uncooked
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1/2 cups finely chopped white or yellow onions
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 can Mexican style tomatoes (4 1/2 ounces)
- 1 finely chopped bell pepper (any color)
- salt and pepper, to taste (optional)

Instructions

1. Heat canola oil in a medium nonstick saucepan over medium heat and sauté the rice just until golden (about 5 minutes).
2. Add 1/2 cup if moisture is needed. Add the onions and garlic and sauté for a couple of minutes.
3. Stir in tomatoes (including juice), the rest of the broth, and bell pepper. Bring mixture to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Simmer, covered, for 20 to 25 minutes or until the broth is absorbed. Add salt and pepper to taste, if desired, and serve.

Nutritional Information

- Calories: 240
- Protein: 6g
- Carbohydrates: 43g
- Dietary fiber: 3.3g
- Fat: 5.7g
- Saturated fat: 0.9g
- Mono Fat: 2.5g
- Poly Fat: 1.6g
- Cholesterol: 2mg
- Sodium: 54mg
- Calories from Fat: 21%

Recipe courtesy of WebMD.com

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